

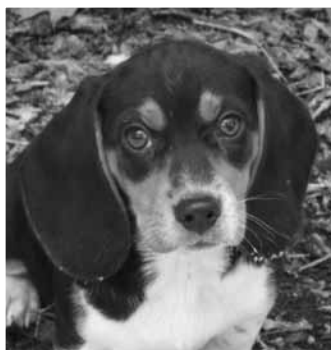
Winter 2010/Spring 2011

# chronicles from the connection

## Will You Pay it Forward?

If you are reading this newsletter, chances are that you or someone you know adopted an animal from us. Take a moment and think about what that dog or cat means to you and your family. Now imagine your beloved pet sitting alone in a stainless steel shelter cage. Every single animal we have ever rescued has been there. That's hard to think about isn't it? Worse yet is to imagine what might have happened if Vicky's Pet Connection had not been there to rescue your pet from that same shelter. It could have happened. But it didn't. Why? Because at some time in the past, some stranger, someone you have never met, took a

moment and shoved a few dollar bills into one of our donation jars. Or maybe they sat down and wrote a donation check to us. **Some completely anonymous stranger saved your pet.** Now, we ask you, **will you pay it forward?** Will YOU be the anonymous angel who gives the donation that saves someone else's best friend? Will YOU be the person that someone silently thanks when they look across the room to see the beloved companion that has come to mean the world to them?



If your economic situation allows you only a \$5 donation, make it! **No donation is too small.** This will ultimately save HUNDREDS of lives. The animals are helpless, but you are empowered!

We get so few chances in life to really make a difference. So many of life's issues are complicated. **This isn't complicated. You make a donation, you save a life.** Pay it forward. Be some animal's angel.

bringing people and pets together

# Special Needs, **Special Families!**



We never cease to be amazed at the wonderful people who choose to adopt our “special needs” animals like Timon, who was born with Radial Hypoplasia, a genetic mutation that caused the shortening and twisting of his front legs. Like most cats born with this disorder, Timon is not able to fully support his weight on his front legs and compensates by shifting his weight to the back and sitting up like a rabbit. While the condition is not immediately life-threatening, we knew that Timon’s adopters would need to take special precautions and adapt their home to provide a safe environment for this special fellow. In no time at all, a young couple approached us about possibly adopting Timon. Prior to applying for adoption, they had fully researched the disorder, formulated a plan to address his immediate needs and began looking into ways that they could ensure that he remain healthy in the future. Several months after taking him home, they wrote to us to tell us how well he was doing and said “We have really marvelled about how lucky we got when Timon came home with us”. Now, isn’t THAT the pot calling the kettle black?!

## **Inner City Kitties:** A serious need – in need

This summer, our “Inner City Kitties” program returned to bring a free, mobile, spay/neuter clinic to downtown Grand Rapids. Utilizing the the Spay Neuter Express, a fully-equipped, mobile spay/neuter clinic run by Dr. Bruce P. Langlois, ( Hospital Director at the Animal Hospital of Lowell), we were able to underwrite the spaying/neutering of 1,045 cats who otherwise would probably never have had this important procedure.



Pet overpopulation is the number one source of suffering in our companion animals. At Vicky’s Pet Connection, we know that the primary way we can decrease the suffering of animals is to aggressively promote their spaying and neutering. That is why the Inner City Kitties program

is so very important. This year, 1,045 cats received free spay/neuter surgeries through the program at a cost of \$26,650. The number of unwanted and neglected kittens that this will keep out of the animal welfare system is nothing short of staggering.

We need to continue the Inner City Kitties program and we need donations to do that. Until now, a large portion of the funding for this program has come from a generous bequest that we received many years ago from an animal lover named Judy Larson. We think that Ms. Larson would be very proud of how many animals have been helped by her generosity and “Planned Giving” but, alas, those funds are now depleted and funding for the Inner City Kitties program is in question. We need educated animal lovers like YOU who understand the importance of spay/neuter to donate generously to help us continue this critical service.

“Planned Giving” is a way to ensure that your estate is distributed in a manner that best reflects your wishes. The method of planned giving you choose may also financially benefit you as the donor. Please discuss Planned Giving with your estate attorney.

***One of the greatest consolations that one can have on Earth is to see other souls helped by one’s efforts.***

***St. Teresa of Avila***

# The Cottage that Saved a Cat



Buster is a cat that would have never made it out of an animal shelter alive. We're convinced of it. If you went to a shelter to adopt a cat and had to choose between the friendly kitten reaching his paw out of his cage to get your attention or the terrified cat cowering in his litter box, who would you choose? That cowering cat was Buster and although all potential adopters passed him by, we could not.

When we brought Buster into our program, we decided that the best chance we had to get him socialized was to place him into one of the free-roaming, feline-friendly cat rooms at The Critter Cottage, our adoption/outreach center. He was not in a cage. He was free to move about and socialize with the other cats. But he didn't. In fact what he did, was hide ... in the litter boxes, under the cat beds, in the cat tree. Our volunteers begged, cajoled and coaxed him all to no avail. Buster was scared and he wasn't coming out.

It took weeks, months really, to begin to see the change in Buster. He wasn't quite so skittish. He let some of the volunteers pet him a bit. He began to show an interest in the other cats. We couldn't believe what we were seeing. As we watched through the glass doors of the cat room, Buster blossomed. No new cat entered the cat room without being officially welcomed by Buster. He

became the instigator of epic wrestling matches and played tirelessly with the other cats. If there was fun being had in the cat room, Buster was in the middle of it. He was friendly and affectionate with our volunteers but, still, Buster was shy with strangers. Potential adopters came and went and months went by as our volunteers tried in vain to convince them that Buster, the cat hiding in the cat tree, was really a fun-loving clown who would make a great companion.

Eventually the right family walked thru the Critter Cottage doors. They saw in Buster what we saw; a cat that just needed a chance. A chance that would not have been possible if not for the Critter Cottage, and the generous donations of our Critter Cottage sponsors. These monthly sponsors make it possible to keep the doors of the Critter Cottage open while keeping hope alive for so many homeless cats and dogs. It is their generosity that helps ensure that animals like Buster get a chance.

We recently received an update and photos of Buster (now Benson) in his new home. This is what his new mom says: "He is absolutely the sweetest cat I've ever known! He follows me everywhere, is incredibly playful, and always wants to cuddle. It's amazing how he's come out of his shell since the first day we brought him home! Thank you and the volunteers SO much for giving me the opportunity to experience this wonderful creature."

## **Buster, and all his friends, would like to thank our 2010 Critter Cottage Sponsors:**

**Deb Minton & Terry Osborn**  
**Bill & Claudia Hardy**  
**Ada Affic-Julie Barnett**  
**BISSELL, Inc.**  
**David and Michelle Bottrall**  
**Boyd Foundation-Kate Dernocoeur**  
**Lois Levy**  
**Ameriprise Financial-Ada Branch**  
**Norm and Sharon Stiles**  
**West Michigan Marketing Assoc.**



**What is the Critter Cottage?** The Critter Cottage is the adoption/outreach center for Vicky's Pet Connection. Located in Ada, Michigan, the Critter Cottage generates funds through the sale of pet supplies/gifts while providing a warm, welcoming atmosphere in which to showcase some of our adoptable animals. Located in Ada Village at 7205 Thornapple River Drive, The Critter Cottage is run entirely by volunteers and is supported through the donations of generous monthly sponsors. For more information about A Critter Cottage sponsorship, go to [www.vickyspetconnection.org](http://www.vickyspetconnection.org) or call the Cottage at 616-682-4855.



## It Takes a Village

The life-saving work we do at Vicky's Pet Connection is truly a labor of love. We are an **all-volunteer organization** and employ **no paid staff**. This means that we rely heavily on not only our donors, but on the many individuals and businesses who give of their time, talents and services to keep our organization running. We would like to give our heartfelt thanks to; our foster homes, who give the animals in our program a temporary, yet loving and nurturing home while they wait for adoption; the donors and volunteers who keep the doors of our adoption center, the Critter Cottage, open; the veterinarians who care for our critters with the utmost compassion and understanding. This list could go on and on! From writing a newsletter to decorating the Critter Cottage for the holidays, from transporting an animal from a shelter to planning a fundraising event, it is all of YOU who make it possible

**THANK YOU!**

## Life is the Pits

**...when you're not fixed!**

At Vicky's Pet Connection we know that pitbulls can make wonderful family pets but we also know that they are the breed that most crowds our animal shelters. It breaks our hearts to see so many wonderful dogs and puppies dying in shelters in part because of their overpopulation. With this in mind, Vicky's Pet Connection sponsored and underwrote the cost of **"The Great Pit Fix 2010"**. The Kent County Animal Shelter, in conjunction with C-Snip, spayed and neutered 142 pitbulls! We believe that aggressive spay/neuter programs and educating owners about the benefits of these surgeries are the key to decreasing animal suffering in our community.



## Nursery News

Oh those gorgeous little faces .... puppies. Everyone loves puppies and because we've rescued hundreds of pregnant dogs over the years, we've certainly gained a lot of experience in raising them! In fact, it's one of our specialties. We saw the need early on when we realized that pregnant dogs were routinely being euthanized in animal shelters. These shelters were simply unable to provide the round-the-clock care and long-term housing that pregnant and nursing dogs require. Puppies may be cute but they require a lot of time, money and energy to rescue. So, we saw a need and we filled it. We created a special "nursery" for our pregnant moms, worked with veterinarians to educate ourselves on their care and trained volunteers to make it a reality. Now, when a pregnant dog arrives, she has a calm and safe place to whelp and raise her pups. We have dedicated volunteers to ensure that she and her pups get plenty of fresh air, exercise, socialization and love. What do we get in return? We get to enjoy the happy photos of these same moms and pups enjoying life in their new homes after they've been adopted (and plenty of puppy kisses in the meantime).

## BY THE NUMBERS

**700 adoptions in 2010!** (ALL adopted animals are sterilized before leaving our program)

**Additional spay/neuters at a cost of \$106,000:**

- 3,265 Cats
- 400 Dogs



Become a fan of Vicky's Pet Connection and The Critter Cottage on Facebook.

**Search for us!**

# A Senior Moment

A letter from a happy family



"I would like to tell you about the senior dogs we adopted from Vicky's Pet Connection. I heard about them on the radio. Someone from Vicky's Pet Connection was talking about **Golden Paws**, the senior pet rescue program, and what a senior dog might offer to a family. A senior dog sounded like just what we needed. I had been wanting to have a dog in our life but did not want to go through all the training and puppy energy. My husband and I are in our 60's and just wanted a companion to go for walks with us and be a friend. We called about Mackenzie (Kenzie), a chocolate lab, about 8 years old. We came to meet her and took her home just to make sure we all clicked together. She has been such a joy and has added so much to our lives. She is so laid back, loves going for walks and being in the water.

A few months later we decided that Kenzie could use some company during the day while we are gone, so we contacted Vicky's and asked them to keep an eye open for another perfect dog. A couple weeks later they called about Benji (Bennie), a Schnauzer mix about 6 years old. Again, we met Bennie and took him home to try it out for a week and of course we fell in love with him. Bennie loves to run and is always willing to go for a walk, but knows his boundaries. He has a bit more energy than Kenzie but is still manageable. He loves being with my husband, going in the jeep and being outside.

Well a year later, we are all a family. They make sure my husband and I get our walk each evening. They have never run away, chewed on anything in the house or gotten into anything they should not. They have been so much fun and are such good dogs, all they ask for is affection and our love, which they get a lot of. They love going places with us and are so good, they are very sociable and good with other dogs. It is wonderful getting them pre-trained and they go at our pace.

I think your effort to save senior dogs is great and a perfect solution for people like us, who do not have the time and energy it takes to properly train a younger dog.

Thank you so much and keep getting the word out about those seniors."

*To read more about "Golden Paws", our program that helps senior pets find homes, go to [vickypetconnection.org](http://vickypetconnection.org)*

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## Kids to the Rescue

We've been amazed at the creative ways that young people have found to help raise money for the homeless animals of Vicky's Pet Connection.

In the last few months we've had kids who have collected pop cans, sold handmade jewelry and dog biscuits and even kids who staged a "mini-carnival" in their backyard all in an effort to raise donations. Some of our youngest supporters also regularly stop by the Critter Cottage to share a portion of their allowance with us.

Pictured to the right are the "Pop Can Kids". Their goal is to raise \$1000 to donate to Vicky's Pet Connection. Based on what they have collected so far, we think they will make their goal! You can help by dropping your returnable cans and bottles off at the Critter Cottage any time!

Now these are some kids who are making a difference in their community!

Thanks, kids!



**CAT ADOPTIONS** at PetSmart the first two Saturdays of the month, located at 28th Street & East Paris, or during all business hours at The Critter Cottage. **DOG ADOPTIONS** by appointment and most Saturdays at The Critter Cottage, located at 7205 Thornapple River Drive in Ada Village.



## A PET'S 10 COMMANDMENTS

1. My life is likely to last 10-15 years. Any separation from you is likely to be painful.
2. Give me time to understand what you want of me.
3. Place your trust in me. It is crucial for my well-being.



4. Don't be angry with me for long and don't lock me up as punishment. You have your work, your friends, your entertainment, but I have only you.
5. Talk to me. Even if I don't understand your words, I do understand your voice when speaking to me.
6. Be aware that however you treat me, I will never forget it.
7. Before you strike me, remember that I could hurt you, and yet, I choose not to bite you.
8. Before you scold me for being lazy or uncooperative, ask yourself if something might be bothering me. Perhaps I'm not getting the right food, I have been in the sun too long, or my heart might be getting old or weak.
9. Please take care of me when I grow old. You too, will grow old.

10. On the ultimate difficult journey, go with me please. Don't make me face this alone. Everything is easier for me if you are there, because I love you so.

*~Take a moment today to thank God for your pets. Enjoy and take good care of them. Life would be a much duller, less joyful experience without God's critters.*



Visit [www.vickypetconnection.org](http://www.vickypetconnection.org) for easy ways to help the animals every day!